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## BOOK REVIEWS.

"VALENTINO," heralded in advance by sundry paragraphs in the daily papers and mysterious mentions concerning the advent of a strictly historical novel, has finally reached us from its publishers, Scribner's Sons, and from the pen of William Waldorf Astor.

The very pleasing and complimentary story that accompanied the early notices of this volume must, upon the reading of the finished work, dissipate itself into the realms of fable and the consistency of air. The story that the Messrs. Scribner's Sons received an anonymous manuscript, and so pleased with the reading of it were they that it was accepted, and then they were made aware that the author was no less a personage than our ex-Minister to Italy. However gratifying this may be to Mr. Astor, we must be permitted to doubt it. Nor does this convey any disparaging suggestion. Longfellow is said to have paid for the first edition of his maiden effort, and James Russell Lowell is known to have done so. While the fact of so doing does not indicate lack of ability, the ability or willingness to do it, on the other hand, does not guarantee even future success.

"Valentino" calls for criticism only on account of the author; were it written by one who had attained no social or political position, it might be dismissed with half a dozen lines; this, under the circumstances, would hardly be justice. The plot upon which the tale is built is good, as it must naturally be, inasmuch as it is practically a rescript from Italian records; the conversational parts in some instances are fair, but whether fair or poor, they have no snap, no originality, and are altogether unnatural to the persons who are credited with the speeches. If Machiavelli talked in life as he is made to talk in these pages, he would have figured in history in a somewhat less brilliant manner than he does at present, and Cesare Borgia's accredited intelligence would hardly have permitted such observations as are here put into his mouth. There are, as we have said, a number of conversational pages where the language is good, the expressions natural and the subjects well chosen, but they are exceptional, and that alone perhaps makes them noticeable. The descriptions of interiors, the furnishings or the decorations of a room, a banquet hall, an armory, a castle, a fortress—anything that could be seen and with note-book in hand could be copied in words—are well done, the best work, in fact, in the book—the only work that can bring any reasonable satisfaction to the reader, lies in these descriptions. But what can we say of the "filling in" of the connecting chapters between these tolerable conversations and these passable descriptions, the main body of the writing, the matter that we must read in order to understand the little that we enjoy reading? It is marvelous in its combination of words, marvelous as is the composition of the prize student of our public schools.

"ALONG ALASKA'S GREAT RIVER" is the title of a work by Frederick Schwatka, published by Cassell & Co., and is the record of the exploring expedition into Alaska in the year 1883, of which Lieut. Schwatka was the commander. The book is a most interesting account of a country and a people very little known; it gives one a knowledge of a United States possession that has had very little written about it, and in its description of the Chilkat tribes explains the characteristics and habits of those savages which resolve themselves into quite commonplace customs when explained and understood.

THE December Century contains more readable papers than have fallen to the lot of any one number for some months past. There is a sense of disappointment in the article on Persia by S. G. W. Benjamin; there are a great many pages and several fine illustrations, but the information conveyed is meagre. Many words have been employed to convey very little intelligence. Persia is a country that for many obvious reasons has an interest more or less intense to the generality of readers; the author speaks of summer and winter, with not one word as to the difference in climate; he says "as one begins to ascend the mountains he becomes aware that he is entering upon scenery of a different character," but no explanation of how it differs; he says that "the Shimiran is a part of the great Elburz chain," which has no possible interest to those who either do or do not already know it, and yet he neglects to tell us the appearance of the streets and how they compare in conveniences, &c., with those with which we are conversant. It is unfortunate that such a very able writer should fail in making such a very rich subject engrossingly interesting. The other articles, as we said, are noticeably good. "The Private History of a Campaign that Failed," by Mark Twain, is laughable and natural. "The Lamia of Keats" is excellent and well illustrated; a good portrait of Mrs. Helen Jackson is the frontispiece; "Faith Cure," is noticeable; and the articles on the Monitors and the Loss of the Monitor are first rate. "Topics of the Times" takes hold of a prolific subject—the trash disseminated through Sunday-school libraries, and might suggest that some of the attention given to Sunday newspapers would be more properly dispensed in the school itself.

FRANK'S Christmas and New Year's Cards for this season are hardly equal to those we have formerly had from them, although they are good and worthily put out. The usual "large majority" of angels of uncertain age and enormous-mouthed children in nightgowns prevails, though, fortunately, neither of these subjects captured the first prize, which went to C. D. Weldon for a very neat design, although somewhat conservative in its tendency, embracing the regulation Santa Claus in his sled, followed by a retinue of rocking-horses, dolls and other things dear to the childish heart. The second and fourth prizes go again to the angel and sachet bags attached, are better in the main than the prize cards, all but the first prize, which is fortunate for the general purchaser, as the means of the masses make the prize cards inaccessible.

Wide Awake for December is a capital number and has many good articles and illustrations. Wide Awake, in fact, has made such wonderful artistic progress during the past few years that it now disputes, and very creditably, the claim to first place with St. Nicholas. One of the most interesting of

the narratives in the present number is "Fire Place Stories," a review of tile-making practically, and leading up to a very neat compliment to the Low Tiles in conclusion.

The Book Buyer, Charles Scribner's Sons' monthly advertising medium, has a new cover design by Halm for its Christmas issue, a great improvement on its old one. There is a large number of handsome illustrations through the book, taken from holiday publications, and all quite interesting. A novel feature is the review department containing contributions on new books by Lieut. Greeley, George Parsons Lathrop, Julian Hawthorne, Brander Matthews, R. H. Stoddard, Eugene Schuyler, Laurence Hutton and several others. A biographical sketch and wood-cut by Frank Stockton, who gives us such charming short stories, makes the number valuable, even though the other good material were abbreviated.

MESSRS. TICKNOR & CO., Boston, have published one of the most complete and thoroughly satisfactory works on Japan that the American public has been privileged to enjoy. It is entitled "Japanese Homes and their Surroundings," and was written by Edward S. Morse, of the Peabody Academy of Science, and for many years a resident and occupying a responsible government position in Japan. The books that have been given us heretofore, ostensibly descriptive of Japanese life, have been well enough so far as they went, but they have been unsatisfactory in the treatment of the incidents of everyday life that a reader who reads to learn wishes to know of. Christopher Dresser has given us charming and accurate descriptions of the marvelous carvings and the wonderful handicraft of these people; he has described their temples and their palaces; he has acquainted us with the peculiarities of their religion and let us into some of the phases of their superstitions, but he has neglected their daily life; he has dwelt upon the works of earlier centuries than ours and neglected, in a great measure, what is transpiring to-day. Prof. Morse has seen everything that every one sees, but, unlike the majority of persons, he has thought all that he has seen worthy of notice, and has very readily discovered that the uninteresting details of a strange people are the very details that it is the most interesting to read. The prosaic life of an ordinary citizen of Tokio, the house that he occupies, whether its roof be shingled, tiled or thatched, the kind of tools the builders use in constructing such a house and such a roof, the interiors of these dwellings, the furnishings of the tea-room, the guest-room, the upper rooms, the decoration of the ceiling and walls and doors and windows, the mode of cooking, the appliances in the kitchen, the halls and stairways, how the people bathe, sleep, look, act, in every form. Their lights, fences, gardens, flower-pots, and every other of the minor details of their existence, are described and illustrated until we are thoroughly familiar with all they do and all they are said to do.

Typographically and mechanically, also, the volume is perfect.

The Quiver, Cassell & Co.'s publication, enters its second year as "an American magazine" (as it is termed by its New York publishers), and promises as much interesting reading in the future as it has given us in the past. The fact that its contributors are principally English takes from it something of its character of an American magazine; the January issue, for instance, has only one name amongst its writers that we recognize as belonging to this country. There are many illustrations and much in a pictorial as well as in an intellectual sense to please and entertain.

Godley's Lady's Book for 1886 gives a premium to its subscribers in the shape of a steel engraving entitled "Sympathy," representing a healthy-looking little girl, with a tear-stained face, sitting on a stair and a melancholy dog looking over her shoulder. The idea of the picture is good; we wish we could say as much for the engraving.

R. WORTHINGTON, we learn, has opened his new retail store at No. 747 Broadway with a fine stock of books.

THE Atlantic Monthly for 1886 is making a special effort to give its contemplated readers something interesting and at the same time to attract new subscribers to its list. Among the many features that will make the magazine enjoyable there will be stories by Charles Egbert Cadden; Henry James will continue "The Princess Casamassima"; William H. Bishop will have a serial; James Russell Lowell will contribute; John Fiske will contribute papers on United States history; Philip Gilbert Hamerton will furnish a series of articles comparing French and English people, character, opinions, customs, etc.; Thomas Baily Aldrich will contribute some short stories.

We have received from The Travelers' Insurance Company, of Hartford, a sheet containing lithographic reproductions of the faces of prominent French journalists—Girardin, Cassagnac, Rochefort and several others whose names, if not their pictures, are familiar to us. The plate is well made up in Root & Tinker's usual style, and altogether it does credit to the advertising man of the institution. We are requested, in connection with this article, to say that The Travelers' is a wonderful corporation and the largest accident company in the world. We willingly say so, although it is accompanied with the confession that we absolutely know nothing about it. We presume it to be the best and most enterprising, because we see its advertisement so widely distributed, and when we find an advertiser we at once conclude that he is the best in his line.

MESSRS. CASSELL & CO. (N. Y.) have given the trade a very useful and a very complete work entitled "The Dyeing of Textile Fabrics," by J. J. Hummel, containing over 500 pages and elaborated with a considerable number of illustrations and diagrams, rather more explanatory than artistic, but sufficiently of both to serve their purpose. As the title implies, the purpose of the book is to furnish a reliable reference or encyclopedia of scientific and practical information concerning the art of dyeing. This profession of dyer, with all the other professions, was at one time regarded as not beneath the notice of kings, and the makers and users of that historic purple that came from the blood of a shellfish were looked upon as personages for their native place to be proud of. Of late years machinery has so entirely taken the place of hand work, and

very largely of brain work as well, that many of these ancient occupations that were so highly regarded, have fallen into quite an ordinary channel. This may or may not be so with the dyer, but whatever it is the facts given in this volume are valuable, almost indispensable we should say, and our advice would be to the trade to buy one and speedily.

THE Christmas number of the Publishers' Weekly is far ahead of its previous issues and a most creditable and worthy production. As usual, it is made up of illustrations from the prominent books appearing with the holiday season. In addition to the mere recital of the books that the various publishers have offered to the public, a list that is both useful and interesting, the study of the different styles of the engravings and the taste of the publishers, is worthy a few moments' time. The notices given of the many books are, in the main, descriptive of their contents and character, and give an intending purchaser a good idea of what to buy. (31 Park Row, New York.)

"THE Suburban Cottage, its Design and Construction," by W. B. Tuthill, A. M., published by W. T. Comstock, 6 Astor Place, New York (\$1.50), is a collection of articles that appeared in Building recently, and "were written," so the preface says, "with the intention of aiding the student of architecture in gaining a portion of that technical knowledge of which he must be the master." As the title implies, the object of the book is to instruct or give practical information on the dry, but highly essential, details of cottage construction, and in doing so covers the ground, figuratively and literally, in eight chapters, devoted respectively to the Plan, Elevations, Masonry, Framing, the Roof, General Details, Plastering and Plumbing. The book is the work of a thoroughly practical writer, and is therefore of considerable value to architects in general.

THE CRITIC COMPANY acts as the agent in this country for what is said to be the leading literary journal of Italy, the Nuova Antologia, and offers yearly subscriptions to the American public at \$10 each. We have not yet been favored with any more intimate acquaintance than that offered by the receipt of a partly descriptive circular, and are unable to say whether the articles are printed in English or Italian or one of the dead languages, as the circular fails to instruct on that point. The list of contributors, embracing Senators, Deputies, novelists and professors, is doubtless a formidable one, although the names will probably, in the main, be new to readers in this vicinity.

THE Art Amateur for January presents to its readers a colored reproduction of a head by Henry Mosler. The plate is one of the best that has been given in any of the recent magazines and in selection of subject and beauty of lithographic work is noticeably better than the Christmas efforts of the foreign publications. Aside from this plate, the current number of the Art Amateur has several supplements of designs that are worthy attention.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF WAMPUM. Thus shell-money of this peculiar description, composed of small circular disks, perforated and strung together, and used both as currency and also (so far as our information extends) in important public and religious ceremonies, has been traced from the eastern coast of North America westward across the continent to California, and thence through the Micronesian Archipelago to China. In no other parts of the world, except those situated along or near this line (as in some parts of Melanesia), has the use of this singular currency been known. It is possible, of course, that the custom may have originated independently in each of the four principal regions in which it existed—that is, in China, Micronesia, California and Eastern North America. Few persons, however, will be inclined to doubt that the Micronesians received this invention from Eastern Asia; and, at the other end of the line, the transmission of the usage from one side of the Rocky Mountains to the other will seem equally probable. The only question will be as to its passage across the Pacific. The fact recorded by Dr. Wilson, in his work already quoted, that in 1833 a Japanese junk was wrecked on the coast of Oregon, and that some of her crew were subsequently rescued from captivity among the Indians of that region, will show how easily this transmission might have been made. Nor is this the only instance known. Mr. Charles Wolcott Brooks, in his report on Japanese vessels wrecked in the North Pacific Ocean, read before the California Academy of Sciences in March, 1876, states that "one of these junks was wrecked on the Queen Charlotte Islands in 1831, and numerous others have been wrecked on other parts of the Northwest coast."—From "The Origin of Primitive Money," in Popular Science Monthly for January.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, in writing of autograph hunters in the January Atlantic, concludes thus: "When my honored ancestor, Governor Thomas Dudley, was getting well on in years, some ingenious person sent him—so Cotton Mather tells us—the following anagram on his name:

Thomas Dudley,  
Ah, old must dye.

This was an entirely unnecessary piece of information to the old gentleman, who was fully aware of the ineapacities, infirmities and limited prospects of his over-ripe period of life without being reminded of the facts, as was shown by the poetry found in his pocket after his death. I do not know whether or not he winced under his anagram, which was probably meant to annoy him. For myself, I have answered the writers of these monetary letters like any others. I have a compassionate and kindly interest in semi-barbarians, but it is not my special business to teach them the decencies of civilized life."

"TEN BOYS who Lived on the Road from Long Ago to Now" is the rather prosy title of a very excellent book by Jane Andrews, giving the history of ten historical men whose names are familiar to us, and who accomplished deeds that should be familiar to us as well. The author tells of Kablu, Darius, Cleon, Horatius, Wulf and others, concluding with the mythical Frank Wilson, the boy of 1885, who has the use of all the conveniences of modern inventions and knows how to utilize them. (Lee & Shepard, Boston.)